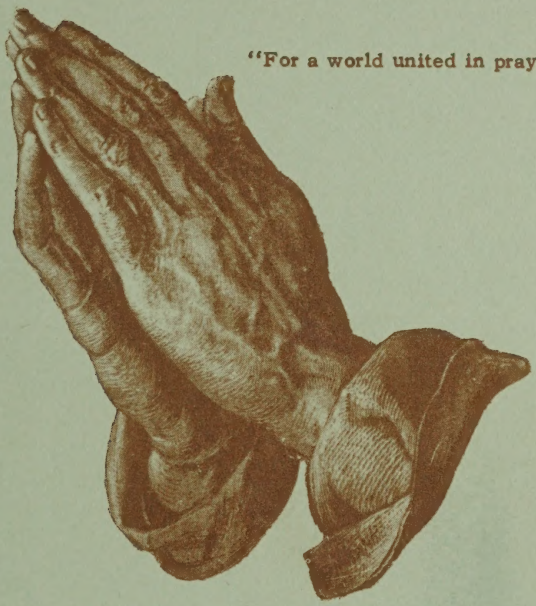
Fellowship in Prayer



"For a world united in prayer"

If you and I really believe in the transcendent, creator, loving God which is our highest common tradition of faith, we must believe that God's purposes for his children include their building of a new city of mankind. It is this faith in God, that he is creator, that he is savior, that he is almighty which...is the contribution of faith to the twentieth century...

— Eugene Carson Blake

Volume XVII **DECEMBER 1966** Number 6

OUR PURPOSE

To promote the practice of prayer among ALL religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God, regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

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FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

22 East 29 Street New York 10016

Volume XVII December 1966 Number 6

CHRISTMAS SPIRIT

Spirit of Christmas

comes to a Child's heart,
light with expectancy and faith—
an eager spirit, free and gay,
joyously spending each new day.

Spirit of Christmas

comes to a Child's mind,
open to claim the whole wide world—
filled with fancy, teeming with plans,
star-lighted eyes, out-reaching hands.

Spirit of Christmas

comes to a Child's Soul,
living Sovereign of all surveyed—
nothing to daunt spontaneous Life,
immune with laughter, kissing strife.

Spirit of Christmas

comes to Innocence,
Empty Cradle offered to God—
Behold Transforming Love at play
in every Child on Christmas Day!

— Lillian Wade Koerner

EDITORIAL

FAMILY OF MAN

A CONCEPT which is basic for the hope of the world recently has been called to attention. This is the beautiful realization that we all are members of what can be called a "Family of Man." No matter how we so often deny it, in our thoughts as well as our actions, the truth of the concept shines through.

The three-word phrase has been underscored particularly by a partly social, partly spectacular, largely sincere organization which has taken for itself the title: *The Society for the Family of Man.* Started by the Protestant Council of the City of New York in 1963, the Society each year honors several individuals for their attainments in a variety of fields. The "Family of Man," award went first to the late President John F. Kennedy, only two weeks before his assassination. In following years former President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson of Canada were cited; and this year the award was given to President Johnson.

As stated, the award dinner is partly social—black tie and protocol—and spectacular, taking place in the ceremonious setting of a New York hotel ballroom and featuring numerous "name" speakers. But also, there is a deep sincerity evident throughout the extravaganza, in the interreligious makeup of the participants but more in the towering strength of the *idea—the hope for a true family of mankind*—that is being honored.

It would be easy to be critical of such events. For the most part, those present have paid large sums for a social evening. Yet, one must realize that the sums they pay are earmarked for programs that will

benefit the underprivileged and needy of our society. Also, one might question the five thousand dollar awards presented to the individuals honored. Yet, without question, these are individuals who will use the funds to further the work for which they have been honored.

* * * * *

AMONG THE award winners this year, we would like to single out one in particular. This is Edward Steichen, the great photographer. He was honored specifically for his work in gathering together what has been called "The Family of Man" photographic exhibit for the Museum of Modern Art. In this exhibit, now available in book form, there exists for all of us a sustaining truth that can override doubt and fear, provide encouragement and hope for the future of all men, all men of all colors and creeds.

We would like to quote briefly from the prologue to the book, written by the great Carl Sandburg. He says, with such eloquence, what the photographs in the Steichen exhibit show—people, people in love, people in the process of growth, people at work, play, in joy, at odds, in need, at peace. . . As Sandburg says it:

"People! flung wide and far, born into toil, struggle, blood and dreams, among lovers, eaters, drinkers, workers, loafers, fighters, players, gamblers. Here are ironworkers, bridgemen, musicians, sandhogs, miners, builders of huts, and skyscrapers, jungle hunters, landlords, and the landless, the loved and the unloved, the lonely and abandoned, the brutal and the compassionate—one big family hugging close to the ball of Earth for its life and being. . .

"In a seething of saints and sinners, winners or losers, in a womb of superstition, faith, genius, crime, sacrifice, here is the crims, sacrifice, here is the People, the one and only source of armies, navies, work-gangs, the living flowing breath of the history of nations, ever lighted by the reality or illusion of hope. Hope is a sustaining human gift. . .

"There is only one man in the world
and his name is All Men.
There is only one woman in the world
and her name is All Women.
There is only one child in the world
and the child's name is All Children."

* * * * *

THERE ARE CERTAIN absolutes which we cannot deny. But—and here is where we falter—we do not always accept them. We all are members of the Family of Man. Yet, we find so many ugly instances which show this man and that man, this group and that group, this race and that race, claiming superiority. There comes to mind a phrase from Orwell's short but piercing book, *Animal Farm,* where the Pigs, gaining control of the Farm, attest to the equality of all animals but at the same time declare that "some are more equal than others."

We see on our local scenes individual instances of discrimination and inequity; on the national scene a cauldron of racial mistrust and fear; around the world, men pitted against each other in mortal battle. Our Family at the moment would seem to be a bickering, selfish generation on the Tree of history.

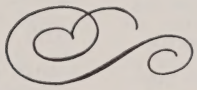
Still, we also find today instances which give rise to hope for the future of the Family. Without closing our eyes to the examples of hate, we find manifestations—on an increasing scale—of love and understanding.

Spiritual men and women of the world, to a degree startling in its scope, are finding similarities in their beliefs strong enough to overcome seeming differences. We note the forthcoming "Week of Prayer for Christian Unity" (being observed January 18-25) with joy and confidence. Though specifically a Christian event, the mass outpouring of prayer for unity, for the ultimate achievement of a true Family of Man, speaks to men of all creeds whose basic belief is in the God of all man-

kind.

This year's "Week of Prayer" has as its theme the phrase, *"Called to One Hope."* In the booklet being used for observances—joint Protestant-Catholic observances in many cases, we note with happiness—it is pointed out that despite the divisions in the human family, *"there is basis for unwavering hope."* This hope is born in prayer, and the volume of prayer is on the increase.

Our ultimate hope, as a Fellowship in Prayer, is and must be in prayer. As a small but growing, humble but confident band of believers in the Family of Man under God, we can give thanks at the end of another year for the foundation being laid through prayer for a household of love which *will* come into being through the brick and mortar of bowed heads and folded hands.



Love is the steel gate to happiness — within
Prayer the gold key that opens it — without

Tolerance and Fraternity are the stop signs
on the crowded freeways of prejudice and bigotry.

— Aarno Davidson

Hanukkah and Advent

THE first day of Hanukkah—or the first Night of Hanukkah, to be more accurate—always falls on the 25th day of the Hebrew month of Kislev. And this usually comes in early or mid-December of our calendar.

Hanukkah has been celebrated on this day since the Temple was rededicated 164 years before the birth of Christ. In fact, Mary and Joseph celebrated Hanukkah in their day, and Our Lord also celebrated it with the Jewish people of His day. The apostles must have known and loved Hanukkah since the days of their boyhood.

The feast is mentioned once in the Gospels. St. John says that ". . . there took place in Jerusalem the feast of the Dedication; and it was winter. And Jesus was walking in the temple, in Solomon's portico." John 10:22,23.

Here is Our Lord in the very Temple which was recaptured by the Maccabees, and rededicated only 164 years before He was born. Now He could fulfill the prophecies and the Law, which He was doing at that very time.

December 25th was not celebrated as the date of Our Lord's birth until about the third or fourth century. The actual date of Our Lord's birth is not known. It had been celebrated on many different days in different parts of the world. To establish some sort of uniformity regarding Christmas,

Many parishes and schools present a "Christmas Hanukkah Program," written by Mr. Leon Paul and published by Our Sunday Visitor. The program represents the deliverance of the Jewish people from their Syrian oppressors and the restoration of the Holy places (commemorated by Hanukkah, the Feast of Lights and Rededication) as anticipating the deliverance of mankind and the restoration of all things in Christ.

the 25th of December was finally chosen as the date for this feast for the universal Church.

Eventually, the four weeks of Advent were established as a preparation for the coming of Christ. And because of this sequence, the feast of Hanukkah will come some time during Advent. But Christians should remember that Hanukkah came first—that the decision to make December 25th the date of Christ's birth was a sheer coincidence which brought the two feasts into the close calendar relationship that exists to this day.

As it so happens through Providence, one of the Sundays of Advent is called "Gaudete Sunday"—a Sunday for rejoicing. It may not be unusual (as happened in 1963) for Gaudete Sunday to fall right during one of the eight days of Hanukkah! So Catholics and Jews can rejoice at the same time. The lights from the Hanukkah menorah and the lights from the Advent candles both shine forth into the night that envelops the world.

In our own home, we keep a Hanukkah menorah in the center of our Advent Wreath with the four Advent Candles around the outside of the wreath. And we light the Shamus (Servant) candle for the menorah from one of the Advent candles to show the harmony that exists between these two feasts of light.

We find no conflict here—only harmony, happiness and hope. Hope for a world of harmony and happiness between people. . .

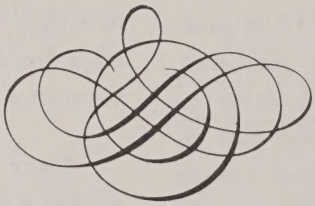
Since the custom of using the Advent Wreath comes from an old pagan rite, (something about a fire wheel as I understand it) there surely could be no harm in incorporating an ancient Jewish rite into the preparations for Christmas—an ancient Jewish rite observed by the Holy Family itself!

And since this is done in the privacy of the home, surely no scandal is given to anyone. Since there are eight candles on the Hanukkah menorah, perhaps one of the eight Beatitudes could be recited with each new candle lighted until all eight Beatitudes are recited on the eighth and last night of Hanukkah. Then simply leave the menorah in the center of the Advent Wreath until the Crib is put up the night before Christmas.

Then perhaps the menorah can be placed somewhere near the Crib—unlit. Perhaps one candle—the Shamus—can be left standing, representing Christ, the Light of the World, whose birth is portrayed in the Crib.

"And the Light of Israel shall be as a fire and the holy one thereof as a flame."

—Leon Paul, courtesy of
Our Sunday Visitor Press,
Huntington, Indiana.



A Message at Christmas

Christmas over all the world! And if the world forget
The meaning of the Christmas star, we know 'tis shining yet!
Its peace be with you, friend of mine, and bless you on your way!
From my heart to your heart, I send this word today.

Christmas over all the world! Yet men have turned from Him
Who left us the great gift of love, Time cannot change or dim,
And may you know today the joy that once the shepherds knew!
From my heart to your heart, I'm sending love to you.

Christmas over all the world! A world of grief and pain!
Yet, piercing through the darkness, His star shall shine again!
And as the Christmas candles glow softly through the night,
My heart and your heart shall keep faith burning bright!

— Grace Bush

No Time for God

Cornelia Bagarotti

A spiritual teacher frequently meets those who want to know about inner life and who seem deeply interested but who have no time for God. Their days are too busy for meditation, for prayer, for study and contact with a teacher or the effort required to find a time apart for the Spirit.

Earth years are very short and the moments of real thinking and self examination in a lifetime are very few indeed. Mostly these moments come through illness, sorrow or some great crisis. Why? Because at no other time will the average busy human individual consider his deeper innermost self and the meaning, direction or values of his life.

Thus, many a lifetime is one of little inward progress from point of view of inner growth. Yet, to all comes the time when the Bridegroom cometh and the lamps that are not filled with oil must remain empty. When earthly life is over, how little of great significance will remain of those busy hours of restless activity that filled year after year.

The man of God radiates the fruits of the Spirit which are love and joy. He is also filled with a great serenity, peace and calm and a deep purity and refinement. Wisdom and compassion, patience and depth mark his understanding of others. These are not qualities which can unfold in the life of one who is rushing from one activity or engagement to another. These are the result of a time apart which is given to inner life. They are beyond time and beyond death and remain the inward treasure which is carried over from incarnation to incarnation.

Nothing on earth is achieved without a plan or desire and spiritual life is the slow transformation of character and values until they are in accord with God's will, not man's will. Great self-discipline and intelligence are needed for this. For man is a creature of the mind, the body, the soul and the spirit. He is as well placed on earth to

handle with intelligence his material life and to contribute to his era and his people. He has many obligations and much to work out in a balanced way.

The one who has no time for God lives entirely in his present personality self, forgetting that this is the temporary expression of his inner being and that before his Higher Self and eternal self can manifest, it must transform that personality Self into its Divine counterpart. *This is the true work* of every lifetime.

Not until the Spirit guides and man is self emptied and reverent is it possible for that Higher Self to manifest. What is meditation, prayer or study but communion with that Higher Self that has its origin in God and which strives to be made in His image. Christ, the way-shower, placed before men the example of what a God-filled human being is like. Such a one gives time for what is important by clothing the moment with the garment of God.

Each day is a precious gift in which to develop a greater awareness of what lies behind the veils of matter, in which to sense and worship the infinite love that has created all life and in which to become a conscious part of eternal life. Time must be given in inner thought to this awareness before it can fill each part of the day as light does the atmosphere in which we live. Then calm will enter in all we do, together with that peace which is beyond man's understanding. Faith is the certainty of the Spirit. It cannot come to those who have no time for God.

FOR RETURNING

Today the dark-fringed clouds part-cover the foaming sea
gently rolling shore-ward, fulfilling destiny,
coming, always coming with treasures for the sand,
going for returning with cleansing, healing hand.

— Clara Sargent Mainwaring

Love Plus Prayer Equals Action

Marion H. Freeman

MAHATMA GANDHI once said, "If a single man achieves the highest kind of love, it will be sufficient to neutralize the hate of millions."

Gandhi was a man who himself achieved the highest kind of love. He spent many hours in meditation and prayer, but he was also a man of action. He taught the art of weaving in the homes of the poor and humble so that they might become self-supporting. He joined in demonstration marches to protest injustice and to help free India from foreign rule.

Many times Gandhi spoke out against the cast system. He beamed waves of love from his very being and soul, out upon the ether. His desire was to reach the hearts of those who sought power at the expense of the downtrodden, the oppressed and the outcast.

Few were concerned with the deplorable conditions which surrounded the lower classes of Indian society. Gandhi was concerned. And he did something about it. *Gandhi prayed.* And he went into action in a peaceable manner. He never raised his hand against any man. Through prayer and meditation he raised his consciousness above the pettiness of jealousy, greed for money, power or possessions. He rose above the feeling of hate. He had a universal love for man.

Did Gandhi ever ask himself, as might you or I: what made a man or a woman or a child commit violence or injustice against another? Or did he know that it was possible that the violator had never known love—true, gentle, trusting love of another human being?

Man's love is a fragment of God's love, which is universal and all-embracing. But man must point the way and accept the responsibility of teaching and showing love for his fellowman. (It doesn't fall from the

heavens like rain.)

* * * *

BECAUSE IT is a frightening responsibility with no promise of immediate success, man has encased himself in a walled, small tower and has directed his attention toward material gain, hoping thus to find his security and love in this manner. In so doing, he has failed to find the bliss, the inner security and the rewards of love as Gandhi knew it. (There are, of course, always a few exceptions.)

To some extent, man has a freedom of choice, unless it is denied him by the acts of other men. And again, in lesser ways man does have some choice of decisions. He may, however, let life "just happen to him," accepting it as fate and therefore unchangeable.

Is it not so that at the core of our being, lies the spark, the magnet, the essence which was God-inspired from the beginning? Look into the eyes of a small child who knows love and again into the eyes of a child who has not known love. Love is there, but it must be inspired or brought forth by *one of us*, a human being. This is our responsibility and our trust.

One asks: "What *is* Love?" Again: "What does it mean to me?" Love is a feeling, not preaching or telling. It is an ability to act in accordance with the feeling and demonstrate that you care for another human being.

Love is a tender thread of communication between two persons. It may be a warm feeling which draws two or more persons into a closer relationship of *trust*.

Love is an atmosphere into which you walk and are warmed. Atmosphere surrounds each of us. What kind of aura surrounds you?

Love is an intangible element which excites, restores, allows tenderness, blesses. Caution; it must be tempered with reason.

Love does not possess. It may then become a negative force

and court hate.

Love is powerful with its own delicacy yet it can be crushed or destroyed, or seemingly so. But God, whom Love *is*, cannot be destroyed. The spark within, may need to be kindled again but the flame within the spark can never die.

* * * *

IS AN ACTION of love simple and easy? It may be. But again it may be difficult. Does it take effort? Usually. But, the more one practices the art of Love the easier it becomes to share love, to express love, to show love, to feel love—not only in yourself but in others. Your spark or magnet attracts and others are drawn to this love quality in you.

What is your part and my part on Earth's stage? Each of us is an actor and wittingly or unwittingly, we play our part. Some of us may be wandering across stage, bumping into other players while searching for our own place. Perhaps we do not know where we should be, either because no one has shown us the way or we cannot find our right place. (Here we should stop and meditate, pray, search for love and guidance.)

We have a part to play and play it we must, with or without assistance. Without help we may falter, we may fall. Who will check the faltering one? Who will stay the hand that kills? If each of us cries out, "Not I Lord," then we have failed. What a pity. And what a pitiful world in which to live!

Who wants to live in a pitiful world? Do you? Do I? The shouts of "No" rush at us like a strong East wind along a Northern shore. For the wind is cold and it is bitter before a fall Northeast storm. And hate is cold and it is bitter until love (be it only a kind word), like a late summer's breeze; gently kisses the face and the heart leaps in sudden joy that someone cares!

Let us cast out our fears of one another. Let superstition die.

Let us act. Let us use our freedom of choice. Let us be crusaders for restoring dignity to the individual.

Share love instead of pity or hate or fear. Light the spark within another and let his spirit be warmed. This, be it known, may be our greatest treasure, now and through eternity.

GRACE NOTES

A stalwart faith and courage
And lifted hands to pray,
Are grace notes from the Master
I seek at break of day.

— Mae Lumpkin

THE IMPOSSIBLE

Love makes one grow
Strong like great oaks. Impossible
Things in love show.

— Loreta Inman

MEDITATIONS FROM MALI

During each of the past few years, in my English classes for teachers from Mali, a newly independent country in West Africa, I have assigned the writing of brief poems or poetic statements. Of a deeply religious people, the students have frequently found the occasion one for recording the meditative moments that transform prayer into poetry. Though not skilled in the writing of English, the Malians have demonstrated through their poems that sincerity, more than verbal facility, is the keynote of eloquence.

— Robert H. Woodward

PRESENCE OF GOD

God is
Everywhere
And his presence seen
Upon all that He has created
In the world.

— Youssouf Dyone

A PRAYER

My Lord,
You who are kind,
Forgive me for my sins;
Let this man know I still love him,
My Lord.

— Aly Tamboura

A QUESTION

My soul
Took wing to God.
What is waiting for Her?
Is it Hell or Heaven?
I am anxious.

— Baba Traore

MIDDAY

The sun
From the highest sky
Throws luminous rays.
Down here, grateful men thank God
For the hear.

— Amadou Sisse

YESTERDAY AND TOMORROW

Sidney A. Cook

PERHAPS it is typical of the free spirit of youth that the past is past and each new day begins afresh. Why should it not be so for all? Why are we tied to tradition and the errors of tradition? Why do old habits of thought persist where new thoughts would be better? Why must mistakes of the past be brought into the present when in the present we should be engaged with the new things of today that are not concerned with the mistakes of yesterday?

Students in the various branches of human psychology will each offer their explanation, but perhaps when all is said and done it will all just come down to the fact that we forget what we are. We think of this life we are living as though all we ever were or can be entirely depended upon it when it is, in fact, but an incident and yesterday but a flash in life persistent and unending.

We brood over our mistakes and fear they will affect our future, when it is the brooding that mars it, and to forget the errors and start anew would make life new and fresh. We think that in the brooding we learn the lesson of the experience, when we would do so much better if we would see the lesson clearly and, having seen it, no longer brood over the experience.

We can see the truth and sense the essence and the wisdom to be gained through experience and, if we will, learn the lesson then and there, not through the creation of todays interminably spoiled by yesterdays. We, too, can say: "I have learned the lesson now, and there is nothing more to be done about it." What freedom that would give for new adventures! In life we must have our adventures. What an adventure must have been the making of a universe and the placing of elements of its management in human hands!

Does God carry regrets into the far reaches of time for our failures of aeons past? Can we conceive that He is sorry now about

errors long gone by? Or is it not godlike to make each new day create its own new values, undisturbed and undiminished by regretful memory?

We too are gods, with each day for our creative use. Each day brings its lessons on that day to be learned. Today is not for the learning of the lessons of yesterday, for today is a new adventure, out of which we create tomorrow.

— From DISCOVERY, published by The Theosophical Society in America.

TO TAKE A WALK

I like to walk when night, adorned
In long, black velvet gown—
Reigns like a queen and proudly wears
A priceless, jeweled crown.

A crown our Father made, with stars
Embedded, set with care;
For night reveals it regally
On her soft raven hair.

I like to walk when sun peeps through
Night's curtain—then grows bold,
And throws on earth God's glory
In path of purest gold.

I like to walk a mountain trail
Where few have ever trod,
It's then I hear Him say, "Be still,
And know that I am God."

— Esther Belle Heins

The Staircase.

Just

up a winding stair,

let us banish

every care,

with prayer.

— *Erica May Brooks*

A GNAWING NEED

I fold my hands in prayer,
Feeling a gnawing need;
And God, playing St. Francis,
Sows in the furrows of my heart
A miniature fertile need.

It blossoms into a rose of faith;
Each thorn turned to a rose;
Again I have that gnawing need,
And all my love its roots I feed,
Strong in the knowledge it will grow.

The roots are anchored in my feet;
Its branches fill my arms;
Its brambles enclose my heart,
And in my eyes the roses bloom.
I find life more than sweet.

I am no acre, but a tiny plot;
Or has God in His wisdom
Made of my soul a flowerpot.
I know it's made of clay and red;
I do not need a hoe or rake,

But clasp my hands in prayer
And Faith, and Love, and rose,
And GOD are there.

— Frank Ankenbrand, Jr.

A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

Marius C. Thode

IN THIS yuletide season we greet each other with the gay salutation of "Merry Christmas!" Children know it as a time when Santa brings them gifts. History marks it as the birth of Jesus—God's most sublime gift to all mankind. No matter what religion man practices, Jesus must be accepted as a teacher who taught that God is spirit, and that the Spirit of God dwells within each of us. Our direct communion with God is through prayer, and through prayer we can possess whatever good we desire: health, wealth, peace and happiness. *"Ask and it shall be given you,"* promised Jesus.

If we practiced the wise teachings of Jesus, we would need fewer man-made laws. All would gain better knowledge of what Jesus meant and our reading of the Gospels would become an excellent tonic for the growth of the soul.

The reading of the Scriptures might be compared to the early search for diamonds. At first only a few were found, and the finders considered themselves fortunate. Then they discovered that when they dug deeper they came upon larger and more precious stones. So it is in our reading of the Bible. The deeper we dig the richer we become.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Some interpret this to imply that we shall see God only after we leave this life. The words we read in the Scriptures have a far wider and richer meaning than we attach to them. God is spirit, and "seeing" God refers to spiritual perception. The spiritual seeing of God comes to us when we are truly pure of heart, accept the will and wisdom of God and understand that God's Kingdom is here on earth. Once we wholeheartedly accept the will of God, instead of insisting on the exercise of our own weaker wills, we shall experience the rich bounty God bestows.

* * * *

CHRISTMAS is a good time to be reborn. Jesus said that unless a man be reborn he will not enter into the Kingdom of God. Until we walk with God in our daily lives, we do not fully share in the blessings which God waits to share with us. Nicodemus, who was of the ruling class in Jerusalem, did not understand what Jesus meant by being reborn. One night he visited Jesus in secret and asked: "If a man be once born, how can he be born again?" Jesus explained: "What is born of natural birth is a thing of nature. What is born of spiritual birth is a thing of spirit."

Jesus taught that God is a loving God, not a God of vengeance. It is the misbehavior of man which punishes humanity. Some ask: "Why does God permit evil to exist?" God does not intrude in the affairs of individuals or nations until we call upon Him in our prayers. Sincere prayer to God is our true solution to overcoming evil. God does not abandon mankind; it is we who become lost when we abandon God.

Prayer changes our character for the better each time we pray, and in the daily practice of prayer we soon realize the Presence of God. Man in modern society needs prayer more than ever. Due to the technical development of our civilization and increasing mechanization, the individual is too often eclipsed. He is no longer complete master of his life, but is forced to conform to man-made rules and customs. That, to some extent, destroys part of his former individual independence. He needs prayer lest he be destroyed completely. In our prayers we gain spiritual guidance and an inner richness which shines through the outer poverty of what we call society.

When we talk with God it is not necessary to strain for originality. Each of us expresses himself differently, but if our prayers are sincere, God understands. Some of us doubt ourselves and our own ability to pray, and therefore we doubt divine power. God will overcome such doubts if we let Him. When love is given, love is returned.

One of the most important commandments of Jesus is *"Love ye one another."* Once love and respect flow across the borders of all countries, there will no longer be need for soldiers to cross those borders.

The pomp and glory of war are human frailties. One day we will discover that there is far greater glory in peace. If men of all faiths, whose fundamental belief is in God, would join together and pray for peace, God would grant the world that blessing. So long as men base their lives wholly on things material, they will continue to blunder into war. A world united in prayer for peace cannot be defeated, for love is stronger than hatred.

PRAYER TO THE PRINCE OF PEACE

O Lord, hear me now!
On the first day of the New Year
I believe, like a child full of hope—
Hope, thick as the pine needles
Strewn under the Christmas tree.
Hope, that man will have compassion
On his brother-man
Tied to the hand of misery.
Wisdom, to quell prejudice
With which his heart is jaundiced.

Lord, take ugliness out of every heart
That the tongue will not lash pain.
And, as you give light to darkness
Give man the gift of love,
That he may enter the New Year warmed
By a ray of winter sunshine.

— Jaye Giammarino

THE CHRISTMAS GIFT

Zelma S. Dennis

One of the lovely customs of Christmas comes from France, the Christmas creche or cradle. For many years we have decorated our mantle with these little figurines of the Nativity story. One never tires of sitting with the Christmas lights aglow, a record playing the carols and contemplating the familiar scene of Bethlehem. This custom was a gift to our way of life, but I am also reminded of the many gifts which are significantly portrayed in this simple scene.

Take, for instance, the unobtrusive sheep grazing nearby; how lovely their innocence—an innocence also so poignantly true of the new born baby Jesus. And even the donkey standing close reveals symbolically patience and steadfast dependability. The shepherds, some approaching and one kneeling, bring into focus the wonder of mankind at such an awe-inspiring birth. And then, bent in reverence with their priceless gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, the wise men signify the wisdom of the early day acknowledging homage to the fulfilling of the prophets' vision.

Standing a little to one side we see the ever-protective father, Joseph, with his gift of understanding and calm, watching over the mother and Child with all the concern with which fathers seem to be so deeply possessed. From Joseph we move closer to the central part of the scene and find the Angel, blessing with its promise of God and light for the new-born Christchild. And seated there is the mother, Mary, example of universal tenderness and love, praying beside this gift of God and Life itself. Knowing in her mother-heart full well the pain and sorrow which lies ahead for each new babe, she feels even more the tremendous importance of this chosen child to change the souls of men.

In the center lies the Christchild Jesus in his cradle of humility, surrounded by faith, love, homage, wonder, innocence, patience, understanding; he radiates through his smile the Divine gift of Hope

and Peace to a waiting world. These are the gifts we find in the Christmas story so old, yet ever so new in our hearts each Christmas day. The gift of God's love revealed in the Christ-child Jesus.

Are you willing to believe that love is the strongest thing in the world—stronger than hate, stronger than evil, stronger than death—and that the blessed life which began in Bethlehem nineteen hundred years ago is the image and brightness of the Eternal Love? Then you can keep Christmas.

And if you keep it for a day, why not always?

— Henry Van Dyke
From THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS

O Lord, let us not live to be useless.

— John Wesley

ANSWER

Out of the blackness of the night
a star arose.
Its radiance answered those
whose eyes were lifted high,
who chose to seek and follow
light from the sky.

Here *is the way*
out of the world's despair!
I must look up in faith to where
God set his beacon shining.

And I must understand,
beyond all words,
that Love went willingly to death,
that only love,
compassion carried to a cross,
is strong enough to stay
the powers of evil,
fuse the fragments of peace,
and heal the body
of humanity this day.

— Emily Sargent Councilman

(First published in MESSENGER
February 4, 1965)

Those who know the truth that sets all free are not those who listen to the Voice of the Negative flesh without, but those who listen to the Voice of the Positive within.

— Virgil McCo mb

THE LOST WORD

Mark Halpern

IN ANCIENT Assyria, there once reigned a tyrant king called Barakaz. He ruled his people from his palace in Nineveh with all the crushing force of ruthless might. Humane feeling and sentiment, he regarded as signs of weakness by which he never permitted himself to be swayed. He exacted utter obedience from his subjects and their implicit acceptance of his authority. His word was their law. His every decision was an act of final and irrevocable justice.

Were it not for one redeeming quality, Barakaz might have been overthrown by the rebellion of his subjects. But their ruler had shown himself to be a courageous warrior, an invincible conqueror and a dauntless defender of their land. He seemed almost insanely reckless of his life in battle, as though he gloried in contemptuously challenging and defying death. His complete heedlessness of personal injury and danger inspired his warriors to great heroism, until no enemy could withstand "the mad Assyians," as they came to be known by the other nations. In this way, King Barakaz was able to continue his tyrannical rule without having to face the revolt of his people.

For many years the wisest men of Assyria had been in a quandary. How could they soften the heart of their courageous but despotic ruler? They often recalled how in his youth, before he succeeded to the throne, Barakaz had been a charming young prince of gentle and gracious manner, beloved by all and regarded as a most worthy offspring of his royal father, whose long reign was characterized by loving beneficence and justice tempered with magnanimous mercy.

Overnight, it seemed, Barakaz lost his cheerful and gracious manner, sinking into a bitter melancholy from which he had never recovered. His father tried everything in his power to raise the spirits of the prince, arranging banquets and games and every other variety of entertainment.

But all had been of no avail. Prince Barakaz had lost all his romantic interest in lovely young maidens even as he had lost interest in his favorite athletic contests. However, when the day came that his father lay on his death-bed, from where he entreated Barakaz to take a princess for his spouse that Assyria might have a queen and in time an heir to the throne, Barakaz dispiritedly gave his word that he would accede to the dying monarch's last request.

And so it was that shortly after ascending to the throne, Barakaz took a queen. A few months following the royal marriage, she died. Barakaz had remained unwed ever since.

The chief ministers and wise men of the court felt that if their king but found some charming princess to take the place of his lost queen, his heart would in time mellow and cause him to renounce his tyrannical ways. And so they used their most tactful words, their most persuasive speech, to influence the ruler to take a queen again.

Barakaz would not listen. Instead, he would fly into a rage, once the true objective in back of his ministers' words became apparent. He wanted no part of another marriage. The fact that there would be no heir to succeed him did not concern him in the least. Once he was gone, they could place on the throne whomever they desired. Thus, the chief ministers and wise men remained in their dilemma. None of their sagacious and eloquently uttered words had any effect upon their king.

Finally one of them threw up his hands, saying to the others: "With all our supposed wisdom and knowledge of the nature of man, we are powerless to influence our king to change his cruel ways. It is not words we lack. Aye, perhaps the trouble is that we have too many words. Just one word, the *right* word, if we but possessed it, could bring about the miracle that all our endless flow of words have failed to accomplish. Let us pray that Heaven vouchsafe us the Lost Word. . .and pray that it may come to us soon...."

* * * * *

ABOUT A fortnight after these words were spoken, a simply clad maiden, worn-looking and covered with the dust of the road, presented herself at the gates

of the king's royal palace and asked one of the guards to conduct her into the presence of the ruler.

The guard stared in amazement at the young woman, his gaze held by her sandaled feet, which were bleeding in several places. She stood there holding something in her closed hand, her eyes looking up to his, beseechingly. When he had recovered sufficiently to find his tongue again, he said, "And do you think, young woman, that just anyone can obtain an audience with the King of Assyria merely by requesting it—least of all, a little nobody like yourself?"

But the maiden showed no resentment at his words. Instead, she kept gazing entreatingly up into his eyes with a winsome little smile that seemed to banish the heavy weariness of her youthful features. "I have walked all the way to Nineveh from afar just to see King Barakaz. I have a gift for him."

"A gift! What gift? What are you hiding there in your hand?"

Opening her hand, she disclosed a tiny sea shell of a delicate pink hue.

The guard stared incredulously at the tiny sea shell, then at the girl. "Do you mean to say that this is the gift you have journeyed from afar to present to the king?" he asked.

She nodded. "But you must not think of it as of no more worth than just an ordinary sea shell. There lives a renowned seer in our town who told me, when I showed it to him, that it is a most rare magic shell. Oh, please let me take it to our king."

For some moments the guard stood there with an unrelenting look of severity. Then, beholding the tears starting from her eyes and noting how the blood kept seeping from the cuts in her feet, he said gruffly: "This is far from the usual thing—but—but—I'll try to have you announced. What is your name, girl?"

"Zyra. And thank you for your great kindness...."

Now, when it was duly made known to King Barakaz that a maiden had come on foot from a distant town just to present him with a gift, and that only a tiny sea shell, he did not know what to make of the situation. He spoke up, and those in his

presence trembled at his bitter voice: "I am called the worst tyrant in the long history of Assyria. All my subjects hate me and stand in fear of me. Why should a poor little beggar of a girl go to all the bother of a long journey on foot just to bring me a gift? What is in back of all this nonsense? Show her into my presence at once."

When Zyra was kneeling before the throne, with the eyes of all the resplendent court staring at her, King Barakaz demanded impatiently: "Where is this precious gift of yours, girl? And tell me why you have brought it to me—me, the most hated man in all Assyria."

Gazing up humbly, and almost fearfully, to the glittering royal splendor of the enthroned monarch, Zyra held out her tiny pink sea shell, saying: "This is my gift, O great King Barakaz. And I have brought it to thee because I have always loved thee. When others in our town would speak hateful words of thee, I would tell them it was not right to slander one who was so unhappy that he was never seen to smile—but who yet was noble-minded and brave enough to forget his unhappiness and lead his people to victory over any enemy that would destroy us."

"But what of all my cruel deeds, girl?"

"Thou shalt redeem thyself with deeds of kindness," she said. "For this magic shell is Heaven's own gift of Love to thee."

Taking the tiny shell in his hand, the king gazed into it long and steadily. In it he seemed to see the face of a maiden he had loved in the days of his youth, a maiden not of royal lineage, whom his father had caused to be banished to a distant province, but who was destined never to reach the land of her exile, the vessel bearing her across the sea going down in a violent storm.

And as Barakaz kept gazing into the shell, it seemed to him that the winsome face he was seeing in his past gradually became that of the maiden now kneeling there before him, so strong was the resemblance between the two. And lo! all the bitterness that had been in his heart throughout the years melted and was gone. Instead he was experiencing once again

the light-hearted joy he had known in those days of his youth before his first beloved was exiled.

The great king then addressed himself to the maiden kneeling there before his throne, and his eyes were soft and his voice gentle: "Arise, Zyra. You have indeed brought me a gift. You have brought me the Gift of gifts—for you have brought me yourself, for whom I have been waiting all these years. At last Assyria shall again have a queen...."

* * * *

And so it was that the Lost Word was indeed found. . .the divine Word of Love that found its way into the heart of King Barakaz. . .that heal- and redeeming Word that is the essence of the true Spirit of Oneness leading our human race, slowly but surely, into the long awaited Golden Age of Lasting Peace and Good Will....

THE LONELY MAN

We pace our tracks unwittingly
and neutral to the bone;
deny the scourged and leave the weak
to bear their cross alone.

From every grief God's hand installs
we shrink and hurry past—
we have no word or single thought
for others in the cast.

What dullards then, who hear His voice
yet lend no brother-hand
to form a chain, as sweeping storms
mow down the lonely man.

— Magny Landstad Jensen

From the Bookshelf . . . .

of Alice Richmond
Denver, Colorado

From: *SCIENCE AND HEALTH WITH KEY TO THE SCRIPTURES, by Mary Baker Eddy; Published 1875, by The Trustees, The First Church of Christ Science, Boston, Massachusetts. Selection from Chapter One, Page 3, entitled "Prayer."*

If we are ungrateful for Life, Truth, and Love, and yet return thanks to God for all blessings, we are insincere and incur the sharp censure our Master pronounces on hypocrites. In such a case, the only acceptable prayer is to put the finger on the lips and remember our blessings. While the heart is far from divine Truth and Love, we cannot conceal the ingratitude of barren lives.

What we most need is the prayer of fervent desire for growth in grace, expressed in patience, meekness, love, and good deeds. To keep the commandments of our Master and follow his example, is our proper debt to him and the only worthy evidence of our gratitude for all that he has done. Outward worship is not of itself sufficient to express loyal and heartfelt gratitude, since he has said: "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

The habitual struggle to be always good is unceasing prayer. Its motives are made manifest in the blessings they bring,—the blessings which, even if not acknowledged in audible words, attest our worthiness to be partakers of Love.

Simply asking that we may love God will never make us love Him; but the longing to be better and holier, expressed in daily watchfulness and in striving to assimilate more of the divine character, will mould and fashion us anew, until we awake in His likeness.

NOTICES and COMMENTS

GIFT SUBSCRIPTIONS. We offer a reminder that a gift subscription to *Fellowship in Prayer* might be just what you are looking for in the way of a special gift. Though the Christmas Season is almost here, your orders will be processed without delay.

WORLD-WIDE DIVINE LOVE. We continue to receive requests for leaflets made available through the World-Wide Divine Love Radiation Service, which offers a synchronizing time-table for prayer around the world. We still have a substantial supply of leaflets on hand; requests for them may be made through our office.

SPECIAL FEATURE. We are pleased to present in the center-fold of this issue not only an inspiring cinquain by Erica May Brooks, but also the reproduction of a watercolor, "The Staircase," which she created in 1929. Both the art and the artistry in words, we know, will continue to live many more years.

FOR OUR LIBRARY. We are the proud recipients of a new book of poetry presented by the author, Emily Sargent Councilman. Well-known to the readers of many magazines for her inspired verse, Mrs. Councilman is one of our Advisors in the Southern Zone. Her compact and attractive booklet, *Bird on a Green Bough,* is a publication of South and West, Inc., a nonprofit literary association dedicated to the furtherance of all the arts, at Fort Smith, Arkansas.... Other contributions to our library will be mentioned in the next issue of our bimonthly.

CHILDREN'S CRUSADE. Callers at our office in New York this fall included Sy and Jill Jackson Miller of Beverly Hills, California, authors of the now famous award-winning song previously mentioned on these pages—"Let There Be Peace on Earth." During our most enjoyable visit, they told us of the continuing activities of the International Children's Choir, a group of eighty-five youngsters of all races which has performed before thousands of people since 1957. Part of the choir's program is to teach audiences "Let There Be Peace on Earth." The group accepts no fees for its appearances, seeking "payment" only through the willingness of the listeners to try to live and share their message of love. We welcome and encourage all such groups who add their efforts to the drive to unite the world in prayer for brotherhood and peace.

NEW CONTRIBUTING EDITOR. Lillian Wade Koerner, whose verses have appeared in *FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER* during the past two years, has accepted our invitation to become a Contributing Editor. Mrs. Koerner has been interested in religious study for many years. She attended classes at Union Theological Seminary, and studied under George and Mary Burnell, widely known for their instruction. For the past twenty years she has been speaker and leader of church and home prayer and study groups. We are grateful to have Mrs. Koerner with us in this capacity, and we are certain she will be of invaluable help to the Fellowship in *many* ways.

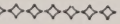
EDWARD J. MEEMAN. We are saddened to report the death of Edward J. Meeman of Memphis, Tennessee, on November 15 at the age of seventy-seven. Mr. Meeman was a fine friend and supporter of the Fellowship and his work on the pages of our bimonthly conveyed deep spiritual insight and concern for all men. At his death, Mr. Meeman was editor-emeritus of the Memphis Press-Scimitar and conservation editor of the Scripps-Howard Newspapers. He was nationally known for his conservation efforts and

was a prominent advocate of civil rights, being honored in 1963 with the 1963 National Human Relations Award of the National Conference of Christians and Jews for his work in this field. We are honored to have known Mr. Meeman and express our sympathy to his family and many close friends.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES. FIP is published six times a year at the rate of $3.00. Special rates are available for additional copies.

HAVE YOU CHANGED YOUR ADDRESS?

If your address has changed in recent months, we would like to be notified promptly, so that there may be no delay in receiving each issue of the bi-monthly. Please send your old address as well as the new one—and don't forget to add the Zip Code number. Thank you!



TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS—

We are sincerely grateful to those readers who have renewed, and are renewing their subscriptions. Those who have not yet done so are invited to renew as soon as possible. Ours is a nonprofit fellowship and only through the help and cooperation of those who are interested in our work can FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER be improved and extended throughout the world.

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MIRRORED VIGNETTE

From where I stood, wild orchid blooms
Colored the cove with purplish glow;
Spellbound by myriad nodding plumes
I went tiptoe
Through twilight's ultraviolet,
So mirrored there that when I trod
The shadings of this royal vignette
I walked with God.

— Margaret Casselman

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